

# Maryland Department of Disabilities Technology Assistance Program



## 2015 Annual Update

Larry Hogan, Governor

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary

Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

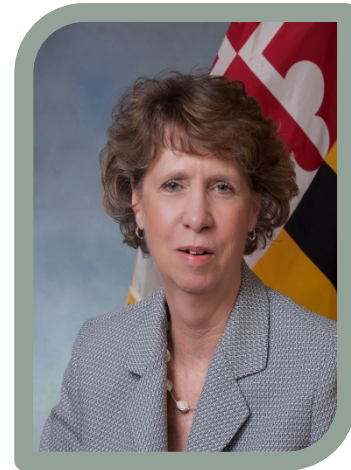
William J. Frank, Deputy Secretary

## Message from the Secretary, MDOD

Advancing the rights and interests of Marylanders with disabilities aimed at full community participation for all is the mission of the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD). Now more than ever, access to technology is not a luxury but a necessity to bring the mission of MDOD to fruition. I am proud of the services provided by The Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) and know these services provide a vital link between many individuals with disabilities and their communities.

Over the past year, MDTAP has touched the lives of innumerable Maryland families, service providers, and individuals with disabilities. For those desiring assistive technology, MDTAP provides a place to learn, experiment, and grow their potential to the fullest. From assistive technology demonstrations to the device loan library to financial programs, MDTAP services break down the barriers of access to independence boosting technology for all Marylanders, regardless of income or experience.

I am proud of the work accomplished and the lives changed through the dedication of MDTAP staff. I look forward to a future brightened by new innovations, taking independence for those with disabilities to new levels and know MDTAP will continue to be the link to these innovations for many Marylanders in the years to come.

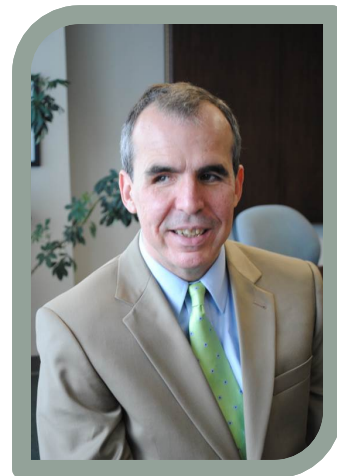


*Secretary Carol Beatty*

## Message from the Executive Director, MDTAP

With a small but dedicated staff, it may come as no surprise that MDTAP has continued to provide outstanding assistive technology services and support during 2015. We've had the opportunity to provide trainings and public awareness sessions to state and federal agencies, provide outreach and direct support to Marylanders across the state, and provide feedback and guidance to other assistive technology programs across the country.

From education to jobs to recreation, the ability to ensure access to assistive devices for all Marylanders with disabilities is the heart of our mission and the ruler by which we measure our success. We are proud of the efforts of our staff, the accomplishments our program has achieved this year, and touched by the stories of those whose lives have been directly impacted through access to assistive technology. We hope to take a few moments to share these successes with you as we plan for a new year of achievements!



*Jim McCarthy, ED*



## Our Mission

*To enhance the lives of all Marylanders with disabilities, older Marylanders, and their families by helping support access to assistive technology (AT) devices and services.*

## Our Staff

**Keyonna Baker**, Assistant Director of Assistive Technology Loan Program  
**Tanya Goodman**, Director of Assistive Technology Loan Program  
**Lori Markland**, Director of Communications, Outreach and Program Development  
**Jim McCarthy**, Executive Director  
**Denise Schuler**, Assistive Technology Specialist  
**Provi Sharpe**, Director of Emergency Management and Reuse Projects  
**Joel Zimba**, Special Projects Coordinator

## Our Advisory Council

**Laura Ann Corbett**, Consumer  
**Melissa Day**, MD Division of Rehabilitation Services  
**Michael Fitzpatrick**, Consumer  
**Patricia Foley**, Center for Independent Living  
**Marni Greenspoon**, MD Disability Law Center  
**Joshua Irzyk**, MD Department of Education  
**Regina Lee**, Consumer/Alternative Financing Liaison  
**Amy Mason**, Consumer  
**Meredith Ritchie**, IMAGE Center, Nonprofit  
**Carolynnette Scott**, MD Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



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## Equipment Demonstrations & Short-term Device Loans

### Data Snapshot

MDTAP and its regional partners provided 62 AT device demonstrations for 113 consumers in 2015.

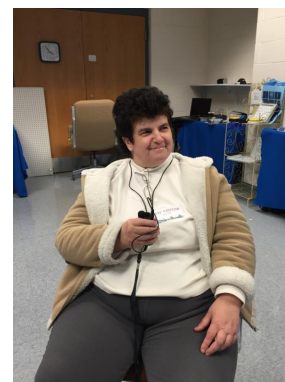
MDTAP and its regional partners provided 174 assistive technology equipment loans to 132 Marylanders in 2015.

The majority of device demonstrations and loans were for vision equipment and speech communication devices.

### Angela's Story

Angela Kouloheras couldn't be happier after discovering a world of assistive technology to help with her hearing loss. After contracting mumps as a young child living in Greece, she experienced significant hearing loss as a lasting side effect. Though she utilized hearing aids while living in Greece, she left them behind when she came to America. But the reality of living and working without any hearing assistance proved much harder than expected.

As a single mother, Angela has struggled to maintain a job that accommodates her hearing loss and allows her to financially provide for her daughter. Recently however, she took a position working as a teacher's aide for students with special needs at Harford High School. Having classes with 30 to 35 children at a time, along with needing to hear the teacher, the challenges of communicating with significant hearing loss became resoundingly obvious, "I have trouble with higher pitches in the classroom and hearing people talking to me. I have to read lips, and always have problems with hearing on the phone."



Making the decision to purchase new hearing aids, Angela worked with the Hearing and Speech Agency to get a hearing evaluation. While there, she was referred to the Technology Assistance Program to explore other technology that could improve her hearing both at home and on the job. Working with Denise Schuler, MDTAP's AT Specialist, she tried out a variety of assistive technologies including personal amplification devices and alerting systems. Deciding to borrow the Pocket Talker to increase amplification in the classroom and the Sonic Shaker to serve as an alarm clock at home, she was surprised at the ability to meld the benefits of the hearing aids with other assistive devices, "The Pocket Talker has helped me hear better in the classroom, like the high pitches and students calling my name. I also heard the sound of the blinker on my car for the first time ever!"

Now that Angela has new hearing aids and a working knowledge of assistive technology options, she plans to work with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to acquire more technology to integrate into her work life. And, when asked about her goals for the future, she was hopeful about the options, "I'd like to go back to school. And I'd like to use this [assistive listening device] in the classroom to hear my teacher!"



## Assistive Technology Financial Loans

### Data Snapshot

The Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP) issued 25 low interest financial loans for technology in 2015.

The WorkABILITY Loan Program issued 4 low interest financial loans to purchase equipment to support new or ongoing employment in 2015.

The AT and WorkABILITY loan programs financed over \$400,000 in AT loans for borrowers who otherwise could not afford the equipment.

### Cara's Story

After a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) in 1999 and interstitial lung disease in 2013, Cara Gregg, local community volunteer, decided it was time to get an adapted vehicle. Tired of having to stand out in the cold, snow, rain, and heat to load her wheelchair in and out of her car, she decided to purchase a 2014 Toyota Sienna adapted van.

Combining small grants from a variety of organizations and agencies, as well as receiving a substantial grant from her church, Bridgeway Community Church, Cara researched additional options to pay for the balance of the otherwise costly van. Doing a Google search, she found information about the Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP) and decided to request more information.



After reaching out to the ATLP and submitting an application for financing in February, Ms. Gregg worked closely with Keyonna Baker, Assistant Director of the ATLP, to secure the loan, "She seemed to care that I had a great experience and that the process went smoothly." Having retired from her position as a PG County school teacher, and having given up a variety of activities that she held dear such as traveling, scuba diving, and amusement park rides, Ms. Gregg was excited about the prospect of regaining some of her independence through an accessible car, "I now use much less energy loading and unloading my wheelchair...This allows me to go to community events or meet with friends...to spend less time in bed resting and more time volunteering." Among her many volunteer roles, Cara and her service dog Tank use the vehicle to travel the state promoting the use of service animals, making therapeutic visits to schools for children with disabilities, and working with Fido's Federal Prison Program to train inmates working with service animals.

The ATLP was established to provide financing options to Marylanders who might otherwise not be able to afford the assistive technology they are in need of. Through partnerships with local lenders, the ATLP staff works with consumers one-on-one to help applicants establish monthly payments that are affordable so they can access the equipment they need. And for Ms. Gregg, "Without the program, I would not have been able to afford payments on my van. I want others to have the same experience and outcome as I."



## Equipment Reuse & Recycling

### Data Snapshot

MDTAP facilitated 13 device exchanges via the Equipment Link website, totaling nearly \$10,000 in assistive technology savings to Marylanders.

MDTAP and its regional partners supported 57 refurbished, recycled and long-term device loans totaling nearly \$200,000 in savings to Marylanders.

68 out of 70 clients accessing recycled assistive technology noted that they would not otherwise be able to afford these items.

### Dayshawn's Story

In November, a local family contacted Provi Sharpe at MDTAP in hopes of identifying a new home for a Convaid Cruiser stroller (an adapted stroller) that their child with disabilities had outgrown. Although Provi didn't have any specific clients seeking this type of equipment, she put them in touch with the Lollipop Kids Foundation (LKF), a non-profit that, in part, runs an equipment loan closet for children's durable medical equipment and recreational devices. Within a few days, Lollipop Kids Foundation was able to take possession of the stroller and identify a child who could use it.

8-year-old Dayshawn and his family were in need of an adapted stroller for over a year, and unable to afford one on their own, were delighted to get word of the Lollipop Kids Foundation through Dayshawn's school. A few days before Christmas, Dayshawn and his family attended a LKF equipment clinic so he could be fitted to the stroller by a physical therapist working with the organization. After his fitting, he and his mom, Lauren, were able to take the stroller home, ultimately making it "safer and easier to get around."



With the efforts of MDTAP and Lollipop Kids Foundation working together, one family's donation has made life safer, easier, and happier for another child with a disability.



## Trainings, Public Awareness, I&A, and Social Media

### Data Snapshot

240 individuals received assistive technology trainings in 2015.

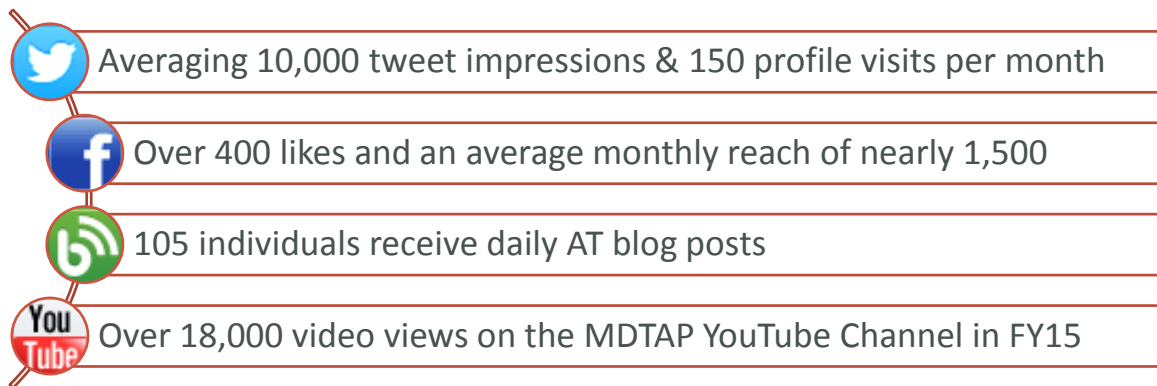
Over 900,000 Marylanders with disabilities, family members, and disability professionals were reached through public awareness.

954 individuals received direct information and assistance when contacting MDTAP and its regional partners.

### Key Outreach Events in 2015

- ADA 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration
- BISM Seniors Possibilities Fair
- World of Possibilities Expo
- Web Accessibility Training Day

### How many people are connecting with MDTAP on social media?



### Awards & Mentions

Where It's AT, MDTAP's blog, was named one of Broadview Network's Top Technology Blogs of 2015!





## Highlights & Key Accomplishments 2015

MDTAP continues to support the efforts of AT Discount Sales & Services, LLC, a company that provides assistive technology discounts to schools, individuals, and organizations purchasing assistive technology across the state of Maryland.

MDTAP provided a grant to the Lollipop Kids Foundation to support their continued efforts in recycling assistive technology devices for children with disabilities across the state. The Lollipop Kids Foundation receives and refurbishes assistive equipment (often costly items that cannot be purchased through insurance or medical assistance), identifies children in the community to receive the recycled devices, customizes the equipment to each child's needs, and loans (long term) the items to the child for the duration of his/her needs. For free.

MDTAP provided a series of high impact trainings on Accessible Documents and Social Media. Covering topics such as legal obligations and current laws, how to make documents accessible, and how to implement effective, accessible social media strategies, MDTAP staff worked with local educators, university staff, and local government agencies to better enhance in-house policies and public outreach.

MDTAP partnered with the National Federation of the Blind to host the Web Accessibility Training Day. Providing both technical and policy tracks, the day-long training event covered a range of topics related to implementing information technology (IT) accessibility policies, how to develop accessible websites and web-based products and services, as well as information on best practices and the future of IT accessibility from a legal standpoint.



## Technology Assistance Program Contacts and Partners 2015

The Maryland Technology Assistance Program is located in Central Baltimore and serves all of Central, Western and Southern Maryland. The Eastern Shore is served with the help of the Bay Area Center for Independent Living (BACIL).

### **Maryland Technology Assistance Program (Serving Central, Southern and Western Maryland)**

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*This document is available in alternate formats upon request.*

